

# Summary of meeting outcomes

## NSW Seafood Industry Forum

2 October 2019

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The NSW Seafood Industry Forum held a meeting in Sydney on Wednesday, 2 October 2019. Specific issues considered by the Forum at its meeting are detailed below.

### **Attendees**

#### ***NSW Seafood Industry Forum members:***

Gary Howard, Professional Fishermen's Association Inc

Erik Poole, Sydney Fish Market Pty Ltd

Mark Boulter, Seafood Importers' Association of Australasia Inc.

Robert McCormack, NSW Aquaculture Association Inc.

Helen Chen, Senior Project Officer, Mission & Delegation, International Engagement

#### ***NSW DPI – Biosecurity & Food Safety:***

Anthony Zammit, Acting Group Director Food Safety & CEO NSW Food Authority (Chair)

David Cusack, Manager Food Standards & Programs

Jeffrey Go, NSW DPI Biosecurity & Food Safety

Patrick Phillips, Team Leader, Regulatory Operations Unit

Jaime Garcia, Secretariat

#### ***NSW DPI – Industry and Engagement:***

Sus Perkins, Manager Stakeholder Engagement & Community, Department of Industry

### ***Apologies:***

Anthony Mercer, De Costi Seafoods/Tassal Group Ltd

Tricia Beatty, Professional Fishermen's Association Inc

Sarah Britton, NSW Chief Veterinary Officer & Group Director Animal Biosecurity, NSW DPI

Ross Fidden, Commercial Fishermen's Co-operative Ltd

Kerry Strangas, Master Fish Merchants Association

Mark Mackie, Manager, Regulatory Operations Unit

Melissa Walker, NSW DPI Biosecurity & Food Safety

Lisa Szabo, Group Director Food Safety & CEO NSW Food Authority, NSW DPI

Craig Shadbolt, Manager Food Incident Response & Complaints, NSW DPI

Ian Sanders, Director International Engagement

### **Industry updates**

Members provided updates on key and emerging issues in their respective industry sectors. Issues raised included:

- Members discussed the increasing pressures resulting from the current drought conditions that continue to be a major issue for many land-based agriculture industries. The drought is equally impacting marine industries.
- Members are keeping a watching brief on the continuing Carp Herpes Virus issue. Members noted that research work in this area is on-going, with all information due to Government for a final decision by the end of 2019. Members noted this issue needs to a conclusion as Carp Fishermen, Carp Processes, Ornamental Aquaculture

industries that supply the goldfish and the Koi Carp are all impacted by the current uncertainty.

- Members expressed their concerns around the recent recall notice of Korean clams and have asked for the committee to keep a watchful eye on this issue.
- Members noted that 2024 has been set as the moving in date for the new Sydney Fish Markets premises.
- Members were briefed on the legislation changes by the Federal Department of Agriculture in relation to the permit rules for importation of Atlantic salmon.

### **Food Safety Compliance Report Update**

Members were updated on the latest Food Safety Compliance Report and noted that overall compliance in the seafood sector is high and above the desired target of 95% with 450 inspections/audits carried out over the reporting period. This has risen by one percent over the last financial year.

Members were informed that enforcement actions, and the complaint investigations were relatively low considering the large numbers of licensed facilities and compliance activities carried out.

Members were also briefed on the fishing vessel inspection program that has continued with inspections over the financial year, with a compliance rate of 98%. Members were informed that DPI has trained up new officers who have previously worked in the Biosecurity area to join the Fishing Vessel Inspection Program, with a view of adding more inspectors to the future along the south coast as needed.

### **White Spot Disease – Queensland situation update**

Members were updated on the current status on this issue, being that White spot disease was detected in prawn farms on the Logan River (south-east Queensland) in December 2016. Members noted the Qld government response to this outbreak since this time has included a formal emergency response, transition to management programs for the disease, and programs that minimise the risk of further spread. Current objective is eradication, and surveillance is underway to demonstrate freedom from the disease. Currently there is no evidence, through active surveillance, to indicate presence of white spot in NSW prawn farms or wild populations.

Members were informed the Queensland government has implemented formal movement restrictions for high-risk animals, to prohibit movement of the white spot disease restricted area (from Caloundra to the NSW border, and west to Ipswich), unless cooked first.

<https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/business-priorities/animal-industries/animal-health-and-diseases/a-z-list/white-spot-disease>

QLD has also contacted NSW DPI Aquatic Biosecurity advising that the active surveillance of wild polychaete worms is now complete, with no detection of WSSV in any samples tested. Preliminary discussions are scheduled between QLD and NSW to determine an appropriate approach to stakeholder consultation through the risk analysis consideration of this data. Members have been requested to nominate NSW industry members such as prawn farmers and producers for consultation in this regard.

### **Abalone National Surveillance**

Members were updated on the recent changes to the NSW Biosecurity Control Order (Abalone viral ganglioneuritis). In May 2019, the Seafood Industry Forum was provided with information about 'National surveillance for abalone pathogens in wild and farmed abalone'.

This national project has included active surveillance coordinated across all jurisdictions that have wild and/or farmed abalone populations for three listed endemic diseases of trade significance, abalone viral ganglioneuritis, *Perkinsus olseni* and infection with *Xenohalotus californiensis*.

Members were advised that during late 2018 and early 2019, the Victorian government requested that NSW government consider the results of this national surveillance to underpin a review of movements from the Western Abalone Zone of Victoria through inclusion of this data to demonstrate proof of freedom from abalone herpes virus (which causes the disease, abalone viral ganglioneuritis (AVG)). The Victorian Government provided NSW DPI Chief Veterinary Officer with resultant data in May 2019. The data included negative results for abalone herpes virus in 180 individual abalone sampled (of all size classes, from all reef codes in that zone previously affected by AVG). This proof of freedom data from AVG from the Western Abalone Zone of Victoria provided 95% confidence of detecting 1.7% prevalence across the sampled population.

In July 2019, recommendations were made to change the Control Order, as the review of the risk assessment concluded that the risk of introducing abalone herpes virus into NSW populations as negligible, from movement of live wild abalone from the Western Victorian Abalone Zone. Members noted that letters advising of this change were sent to the NSW abalone industry members on 3 July 2019, and the changes were made on 5 July 2019.

### **Micro Plastics in Seafood**

An information paper was presented to members indicating that microplastics are an emerging issue for environmental sustainability in marine environments. The presence of plastic in the world's oceans is an area of considerable concern from an ecological perspective that has raised questions about the potential for human health impacts to be associated with consumption of seafood that has been exposed to microplastics.

Members noted that several studies have shown that current human exposure to microplastics from seafood consumption is low.

Members also noted that a detailed overview on microplastics in seafood has been provided by Safefish and can be found on their website. This includes reference to the Federal Government's initiatives and international studies on microplastics.

<https://www.safefish.com.au/search?term=micro+plastic>

### **Wet Storage of Shellfish at Retail Fact Sheet**

The Chair presented a paper on the Wet storage of bivalve shellfish undertaken to extend shelf life and improve the freshness of the final product offered to the customer.

Members were advised that Bivalve shellfish wet storage facilities operated by the wholesale (production and processing) sector are required to be licensed with the NSW Food Authority and implement a detailed food safety plan. Retail operations are not subject to the same prescriptive requirements, but still have a responsibility to ensure that they operate in a manner that does not compromise food safety. The NSW retail and food service sector is regulated by local council/partner agency Environmental Health Officers (EHOs).

The NSW Food Authority has developed a fact sheet on the wet storage of bivalve shellfish by retail operators.

[http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/Documents/retailfactsheets/food\\_safety\\_guidelines\\_wet\\_storage\\_shellfish.pdf](http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/Documents/retailfactsheets/food_safety_guidelines_wet_storage_shellfish.pdf)

The fact sheet provides useful information to assist retail food businesses to meet their responsibility of handling food in a safe manner. To assist EHOs in assessing the suitability of retail shellfish wet storage operations the fact sheet has also been promoted to all local councils.

### **Ciguatera Fish Poisoning**

A paper was presented to members which outlined ciguatera fish poisoning (CFP) incidents in NSW since 2014. Members noted that the fish associated with these incidents were reef fish caught in locations outside NSW and Spanish Mackerel caught in NSW coastal waters. The relatively high number of outbreaks within a short time period indicates that CFP is an emerging issue in NSW.

Management of CFP risk is currently limited to the avoidance of high risk species caught in high risk locations. The Sydney Fish Market guidelines on managing CFP provide the best available information on high risk species and locations. Members agreed to circulate these best practice guidelines to their commercial fisheries and members.

NSW experiences since 2014 and potential implications for the seafood industry are explored in depth in a recently published paper by Farrell et al 2017 'Management of Ciguatera Risk in Eastern Australia' (<https://doi.org/10.3390/toxins9110367>).

### **PFAS Update**

A paper was tabled noting that FSANZ has not updated its PFAS advice since the release of the revised scientific opinion from the European Food Safety Agency (EFSA) in December 2018. FSANZ has advised that it would review the EFSA report and then determine whether updates are required to current advice on tolerable daily intakes in published in 2017.

The update paper included information for the Hawkesbury River, Jervis Bay and the Shoalhaven River.

This will remain a standing item on SIF agenda.

The NSW Food Authority participates in the NSW PFAS Taskforce and the NSW Expert Panel for PFAS.

Information about PFAS sites in NSW, fish sampling and any fishing advisories can be found at the NSW EPA website:

<https://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/your-environment/contaminated-land/pfas-investigation-program>

### **Biosecurity Management Plan**

The Regulatory Operations Team briefed members on the changes to the Biosecurity Regulation 2019 which came into effect on 1 August 2019. Members were advised that producers are being urged to adopt a Biosecurity Management Plan (BMP) to reduce biosecurity risks and increase protection against trespasses.

Further detailed information can be found at the Department's website <https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity/your-role-in-biosecurity/primary-producers/biosecurity-management-plan>

### **International Engagement**

Members were briefed on the ongoing work between the Department's International Engagement Team to prioritise Murray Cod as an export product to China.

Members were also invited to the Innovation in Agriculture Event Invitation: NSW-Guangdong Joint Economic Meeting, Friday 25 October, 2-5pm at ICC, Sydney.

**Korean Clam Products**

Members were verbally briefed on the Korean Clams recall due to Hepatitis A being found in some imported Korean products. Tests have been conducted on these products and results are yet to come in. Members were advised that no Australian products were affected.

**Country of Origin Labelling requirements for seafood**

This was discussed at the SIF forum and members agreed that they would like for Leanne Wilson to provide an out of session paper and then the committee can come back and ask any questions they might have.

*The date for the next meeting of the NSW Seafood Industry Forum in 2020 is to be advised.*